

EASTER IS COMING.

Are you ready?



EASTER

AT SUMMERVILLE BAPTIST

**A 21-Day Devotional
Leading Up To Easter 2025**



Welcome to Your Easter Devotional!

As we walk through this Easter season together, may these devotionals remind us that the story of Jesus is not just one of sacrifice—it's a story of restoration, renewal, and relentless love. Whether through deep grief or daily blessings, God is always drawing us back to Himself. In these pages, you'll find reflections from members of our own church family—real stories of struggle, healing, faith, and hope. Each one points to the truth we celebrate at Easter: ***that the grave is empty, and Jesus is alive.***

If you're holding this devotional and don't yet know Summerville Baptist Church, we're so glad it found its way to you. We're a church rooted in grace, focused on Jesus, and committed to helping people build real relationships with Him and with one another.

This 21-day devotional guide leads us right up to Easter Sunday—and each day, the author of that day's entry will share a short video reading their devotion on our YouTube and Facebook channels. We invite you to follow along, reflect, and walk this journey with us.

Let's move toward the cross and beyond with open hearts—imitating Christ, clinging to His promises, and celebrating the life He offers us all.

-SB Team

Easter Week at Summerville Baptist

Join us during Easter Week for special gatherings like **The Upper Room Worship & Communion Service** (April 16 & 17 at 6:30pm), where we'll step into the story of the Last Supper through scripture, music, and prayer.

Then, on Saturday, April 19, bring your family to **Eggventure**, a free community egg hunt at McKissick Field for kids ages 2–10—complete with games, crafts, and fun for all. Easter weekend continues with a **5pm Saturday Easter Evening Service** at our Downtown campus and Sunday morning celebrations across both of our campuses:

Downtown Campus - 417 Central Ave, Summerville
April 20 Sunday morning Easter services at:
8:15am, 9:30am, and 11:00am

Pinewood Campus - 1114 Orangeburg Rd, Summerville
April 20 Sunday morning Easter services at:
8:30am, 10:00am, and 11:30am

Come as you are. Bring a friend. Celebrate life!



Learn more!





Monday, March 31

Planning Ahead by Theresa Schmulske

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." -Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

When a couple is expecting their first child, a lot of planning ahead is necessary. Many things are needed to prepare for the future hope of the expected child – diapers, formula, crib, changing table, rocking chair, clothes, car seat, blankets, etc. And all this preparation is usually customized to fit the child (depending on whether it is a girl or a boy) and reflects the plans the parents have for the child as they grow up. The types of toys they are encouraged to play with (dolls and tea sets vs race cars and G.I. Joes) as well as which schools and colleges they will attend to prepare them for future employment are all carefully considered to bring about the best possible outcome for their child. Knowing what life challenges lie ahead, the parents are, hopefully, in a good position to share the wisdom and guidance their child will need to prosper.

Have you ever considered this is how God, as our Heavenly Father, sees and plans ahead for each of us as His children? Our earthly fathers contributed their seed to conceive us, but our Heavenly Father chose each gene and chromosome that He wanted to use to weave us together in our mother's womb to make each of us a unique, original creation of His!

In addition to designing our DNA, He also planned ahead by picking out our parents and choosing the time and place and circumstances of our birth – just like He did with Jesus. In **Psalms 139:15-16**, God inspired David to write:

"My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

As we grow up, God guides us through various life experiences to teach us the skills and develop the character traits necessary for us to prosper in the works for which He created us. **"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them."** -Ephesians 2:10

Just as earthly parents plan ahead, so does our Heavenly Father. In **Revelation 13:8**, Christ is described as **"...the Lamb slain [in sacrifice] before the foundation of the world,"** – to restore us to the same deep communion He enjoyed with Adam and Eve before the fall.

Heavenly Father, You know what lies ahead for us. Help us make time to be still before You and listen for Your wisdom and guidance, in Jesus' name. Amen.



Tuesday, April 1

He Wants Our Hearts by Amber Stein

At the beginning of this Lenten season, I was asked a very thought-provoking question in my small group: Do you want your children to completely obey you? Um, yeess? But—with the caveat that they don't LOVE you? Of course not! This question hit me hard. Of COURSE I want my children's hearts! Even if it means struggling through some difficult times.

And I realized that this is also what God wants. Not blind obedience, acting out of obligation. He wants our hearts! Where is my heart? How do I feel about God the Father, truly? Where is my heart? Do I love Him? Or fear Him? This Lent, I am seeking HIM.

Our God is a jealous God. But the word jealous translated from the original Hebrew does not mean envy, but protective. Or zealous. He is protective over my relationship with Him! He wants to keep my heart! Fear the Lord—not in dread, but in awe and reverence. I've heard that having fear and awe of our Lord God is like looking at the Grand Canyon: to be in absolute awe of the beauty and magnificence, but also knowing that it'll hold your death if you fell over the side. As I ponder these things, it has become my everyday goal: to look for God on every page of the Bible. Reading through Exodus, I've seen His absolute patience for the stiff-necked Israelites, and I've felt His frustration, just as I've felt some of my own frustrations with my children.

And yet, in **Exodus 33**, He sends an angel before the Israelites to drive out their enemies, even as He **"kicks them out," to a land flowing with milk and honey (v. 2–3).** He loves and cares for them anyway!

But this gives me hope: God's words to Moses in **33:11—speaking to him like a friend, face to face, so that Moses' face shone with radiance!** When I read God's words in **33:12: "I know you by name and you have found favor with me,"** it makes me long to hear those same words spoken to me. To hear how He knows ME, knows my name, and loves what He sees. And so, I would echo Moses' words: **"Teach me your ways so I may know You and continue to find favor with you."** (v. 13). And as Moses hears from the Lord: **"My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."** (v. 14). So I will continue to seek God's heart—and pray for His continued jealousy for me.

Father, You don't just want our obedience—you want our hearts. Thank You for loving us with such fierce, protective love. Thank You for knowing us by name and calling us into a relationship, not just a set of rules. Help us to love You not out of fear, but out of awe. Shape our hearts to seek You daily, to trust You more deeply, and to walk closely with You, just as Moses did. Teach us Your ways, Lord, so we may know You—and find favor in Your eyes. Let Your presence go with us, and give us rest. In Jesus' name, Amen.



Wednesday, April 2

While We Were Still Sinners by Jo Rayburn

But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. -Romans 5:8

I saw this verse on a t-shirt worn by one of my favorite young ladies at Pinewood campus.

It reminded me that as I prepare to celebrate Christ's resurrection this Easter Sunday, Jesus suffered and died on a cross for me **EVEN THOUGH** I am a sinner.

Romans 5 tells me I have been “**justified through faith and have peace with God through my Lord Jesus Christ.**”

Through Him I have gained “**access by faith into His grace in which I now stand.**”

I will find joy in my suffering because His Word promises it will produce perseverance, character, and hope. God's love has been poured into my heart through the Holy Spirit.

I want to encourage you to read all of **Romans 5** today as you think on all that Christ has done for us.

Heavenly Father, thank You that You loved me enough to send Your only Son to die for my sins. Come Holy Spirit, come. Amen.



WHAT CAN
WASH AWAY
MY SIN?

NOTHING BUT THE
BLOOD OF JESUS.

Thursday, April 3

Finding Worship Everywhere by Meagan Winser

I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. –Psalm 145:1-3, ESV

Worship is an integral part of my life. I love listening to all kinds of worship music, whether instrumental, contemporary bands, or even just the piano. Leading with some of the best musicians around is one of my favorite ways to spend Sunday mornings. I love blaring worship songs in the van with my three kids with the windows down.

People often equate worship with music, but it's not one and the same. Music is only one way we can worship. According to BillyGraham.org, "When we truly are worshipping God, our whole attention is on Him—who He is, how great He is, what He has done for us, how much He loves us. Worship, in other words, takes place when we focus our hearts and minds completely on God."

With that definition in mind, worship can happen just about anywhere... You can worship when you're washing your dishes, because you're grateful for the food you've eaten. Or when you're folding the massive stack of laundry because you have clothes to wear and the ability to wash them. Or even when you're mopping up the fifteenth spill of the day, because you have a roof over your head and a floor to mop.

Worship can happen in quiet mornings before the day starts. Or even in the loud chaos of getting out of the house with bookbags, lunches, and water bottles.

Worship can happen when you're reading the Word or praying over Scripture. It can happen in Bible journaling, by adding creative elements to your Bible or journal. You can worship alone or with a whole congregation. Worship can happen when you're sitting laughing with friends, in conversations, and in fellowship. Worship can happen at the beach or a park or in church buildings or even coffee shops. It can happen in weddings and even at the graveside. Sometimes it's easy to worship, because life is going well. Other times, it can be hard to find the desire to worship because you're walking through a tragedy. Worship can even happen in the mundane boring parts of our lives. Our key verse points out this truth: Worship isn't about us at all. Worship is about God and His excellent greatness. Worship can be in every moment of our lives because God is in every moment. Any time we focus on Him, praising Him for Who He is and what He's done for us... that's worship. I pray you find time to worship Him today, even if it's while you're washing the dishes.

Heavenly Father, I worship You. You are great and greatly to be praised. Forgive me for the times I make worship about me. Help me to find You every day, in every moment, in the good times, the mundane or the tragic. Thank You for Your grace, mercy, and forgiveness. I will extol You and bless Your Name forever. Amen.

Friday, April 4

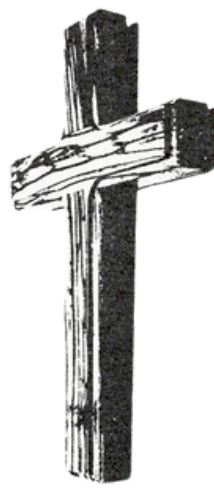
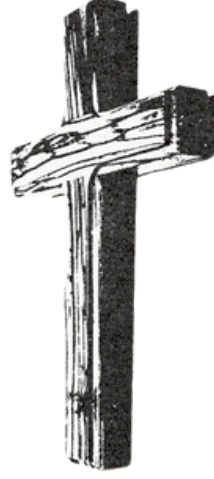
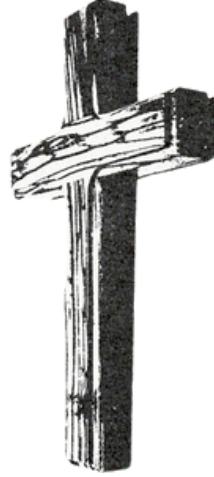
The Cross at the Door by Dr. Maxwell Collins

Like many people, my wife and I are creatures of habit when it comes to finding our pew for Sunday worship service. Every Sunday we usually sit in the same spot, which gives us the same view of the sanctuary we have had for several years. Of course, habits can be broken, especially when someone is already sitting in what is normally your seat. One Sunday morning we found it necessary to move to a different location several pews beyond our typical place. While we were standing for the first hymn, I saw a sight I had never seen before because of our new position. Just to the left of the choir, resting on a rail by the piano, in front of a door, was a cross. From my unique vantage point, the cross was precisely framed by the door. The cross seemed to stand like a sentinel, guarding the entrance. I envisioned the cross as a key one must possess to open the passageway. I could not take my eyes off the cross.

I have turned many doorknobs in my life only to find myself unable to open the door because it was locked. Without possessing a key, I was barred from entering. Unlocked doors allow people to leave one room and proceed into another room.

The door behind the cross that Sunday reminded me that one day, our journey on Earth will end, and we will come to a door we will all want to enter—to our new home, our eternal home in heaven. Will we be barred from entering because the door is locked, and we do not have the key? Jesus said, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved" (John 10:9). The cross represents how much God loves us by giving His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, such that believing in Him we will not perish but have eternal life with Him (John 3:16). Jesus made it clear that He is "the way and the truth and the life" and "no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Jesus is the key—the only key—and the only way to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. He paid the price for our sins on the cross to open the door for us to enter to be with Him forever. May our eyes always be on the cross.

Heavenly Father, thank You for loving me so much You sent Your Son, Jesus, as the key to eternal life with You. May my eyes remain focused on the meaning of the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross as an atonement for my sins. Amen.





Saturday, April 5

Cheerleaders for Christ

by Angela Miller & Tammy Bowers

"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works." -Hebrews 10:24

Not long ago, we found ourselves thinking about those "WWJD" bracelets that were so popular years back. What Would Jesus Do? It's still a powerful question—but lately, we've been reflecting more on what Jesus has already done.

What has Jesus done for us? The most important thing: He died on the cross to save us from our sins. And because of that, we have eternal life. **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).**

He also gave us grace—a gift we didn't earn and certainly don't deserve. Grace is what saved even the thief on the cross, not his works but his faith. **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8–9). "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).**

We are thankful for our salvation—that by declaring Jesus as Lord and believing in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we are saved. **"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9–10).**

And then there's the gift of truth. God's Word, the Bible, offers real, lasting truth that guides, strengthens, and shapes us daily. **"You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31–32).**

Jesus also gives us encouragement. Through Him, we're reminded to build one another up and walk in faith together.

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:5–6).

And above all, we are grateful that Jesus isn't just someone who lived long ago—He is risen and alive today. **"The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay'" (Matthew 28:5–6).**

To sum it all up, here's what Easter means to us:

E – Eternal Life

A – Amazing Grace

S – Salvation

T – Truth

E – Encouragement

R – Risen

We may not have pom-poms,
but we will still cheer for Christ
with everything we've got!

Victory in Jesus—that's our cry!

V-I-C-T-O-R-Y

Victory, victory is our cry!



Sunday, April 6

Faithful to the End by Cynthia M. Putman

**"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."
-Revelation 2:1c**

A few years ago, Wayne and I watched an older film called *The End of the Spear*. It was based on the true story of Jim and Elisabeth Elliot, who were Christian believers and missionaries to the Huaorani people in eastern Ecuador. Jim attempted to contact this group to share the good news about Jesus. Sadly, he was speared to death by them.

Rather than returning to the United States, brave Elisabeth went to witness to the tribe herself. Two of the women there helped her learn their language so she could communicate with them. She lived with them for two years and then moved to serve God for many years elsewhere in South America. Writing over twenty books, she became a well-known speaker and Christian witness to others.

Elisabeth married three times, outliving her second husband. Her third husband outlived her. Well respected, Elisabeth was a stylistic consultant when the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible was written. She passed away in 2015 and went into the arms of Jesus.

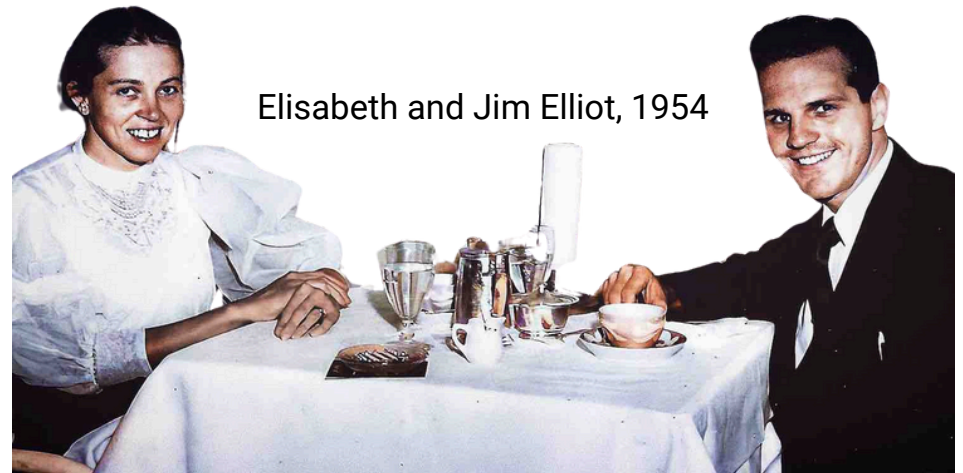


I admire Elisabeth Elliot for her forgiving attitude towards those who wronged her by murdering her husband. Her presence alone testified to the tribe her faith in God and Jesus. She sought to be a worthy example of a believer throughout her lifetime.

At Easter, we often hear messages about the suffering of Jesus when He was tortured and placed on the cross. His sacrifice was an example of His love for us. His resurrection showed the power of Almighty God so we could believe, repent of our sins, and ask God to forgive us. Of course, we should then seek to live a godly life as best we can. Jesus loves us more than life itself.

People like Jim and Elisabeth Elliot truly were willing to give it all for the Lord. Remember them and other Christian believers who have sought to be examples for us.

Dear God, today I pray for Your missionaries who witness and seek to fulfill Your will daily. Please keep them safe and able to serve as You need. Amen.



Elisabeth and Jim Elliot, 1954

Monday, April 7

The Emmaus Walk by Michael Atkinson

One of my favorite Easter passages is about the two men who are walking to Emmaus. They had witnessed the crucifixion of the one they knew as **“Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet powerful in action and speech before God and all the people...”** — Luke 24:19.

As they were walking, **“Jesus Himself came near and began to walk along with them.”** —Luke 24:15 The passage tells us that the two men did not recognize Jesus. That’s one thing I love about the story because it reminds me of many times when I’ve been walking and Jesus was right there with me and I didn’t recognize Him.

As the three men continued their seven mile journey, Jesus explained to them how the Old Testament (Moses and the Prophets) foretold the coming of the Messiah.

When they arrived in Emmaus, Cleopas and his friend invited Jesus to have dinner with them, still not knowing that it was the Risen Christ.

It was when **“He (Jesus) took the bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to them ... their eyes were opened and they recognized him”** —Luke 24:30-31.

How do they recognize Him? I believe that when He took the bread His hands came from underneath his sleeves and they saw the nail scars on His hands. They realized that the One who had been crucified was now alive! With such great news they returned that same hour to Jerusalem to tell the disciples they had seen the Lord.

Have your eyes been opened to who Jesus really is and how much He loves you?

Does your “heart burn within you” when you talk about Jesus?

Who are you walking with these days that you can have a conversation with about Jesus?

Heavenly Father,

Open our eyes to see You.

Open our hearts to experience Your grace and mercy.

Open our minds to understand the scriptures.

Open our mouth that we may speak to others about Your forgiveness and love.

Amen.



Tuesday, April 8

Be Imitators of God by Sue Frazer

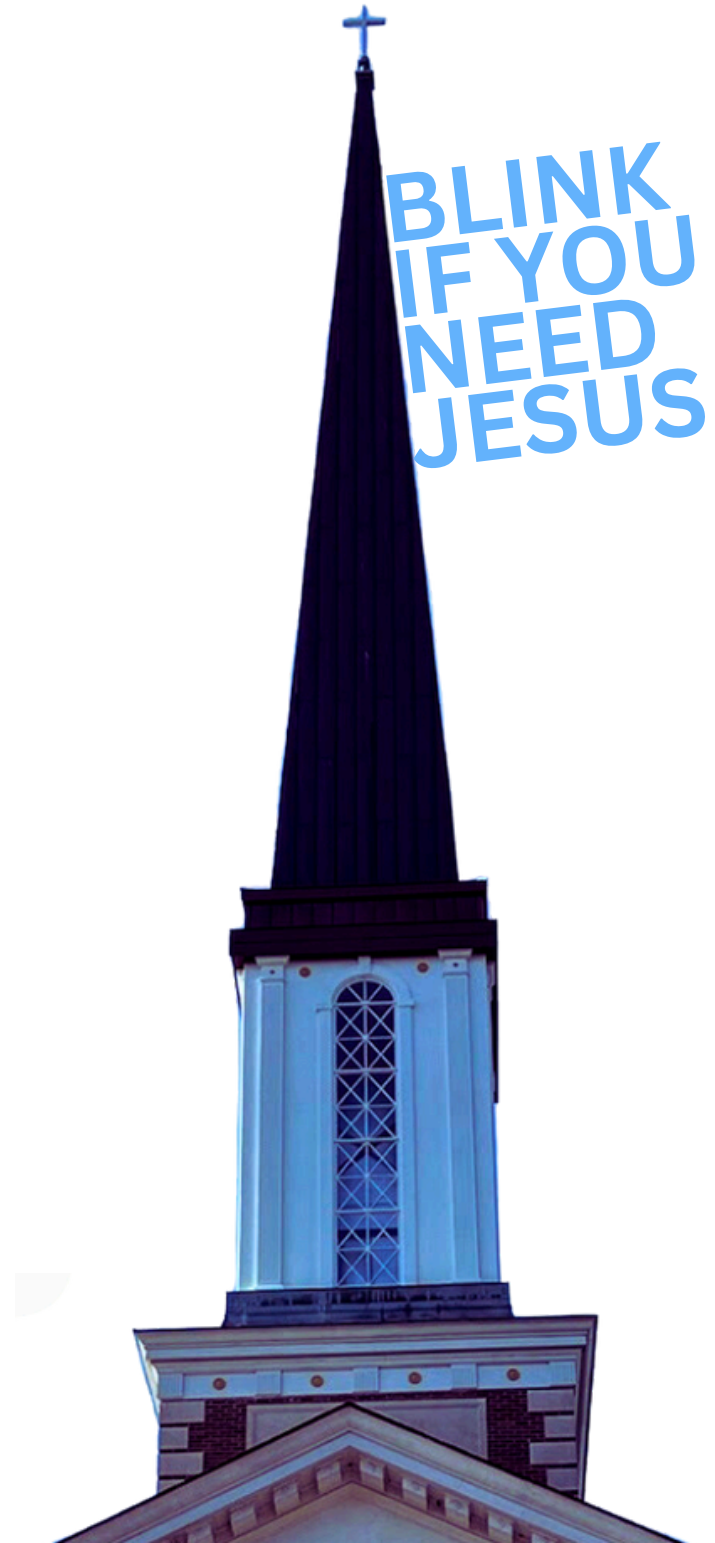
As we're in this Lenten season, I am very aware of my very many blessings and what Jesus did for us!

One of my blessings is my 10-month-old great-grandson, Silas. As he was sitting on the carpeting in my bedroom & I was sitting on the edge of my bed, my glass case that he was playing with – a soft, colorful material – was just out of his reach. I slid it over to him with the heel of my foot. Instead of reaching over & picking it up, as I expected him to do, he looked up at me, grinned & slid it with his heel! How they imitate everything we do!!

Eph. 5:1 says, "Therefore, be imitators of God as dearly loved children."

It couldn't be any more clear than that. It is He that we should imitate.

Gracious Heavenly Father, We are so blessed in so many ways by You. Please help us to be obedient to You and to imitate You more and more each day. In Your Son's precious name we pray, Amen.



Wednesday, April 9

Searching For Peace by Leigh Williams

I'm not one who used to have a "word of the year". Since we moved to SC a couple years ago, my principal always had us choose a word for the year. My first year I chose "hope." After that was "joy", then last year was "calm." I realized during 2024 I wasn't calm. Calm didn't seem to happen in my life, nor did it seem like the word I really wanted to experience.

This year I did not choose a word. I'm not sure if I was asked to choose a word or if I just forgot. A few weeks ago during a stressful time at work and home, I realized what I was really searching for most was peace. Peace was the calm that thought I was looking for the whole previous year. Struggles at home and school were leaving me stressed in all aspects of my life. I felt I could not find a place where I was experiencing peace.

Lately in my search for peace, true peace, calm in all the storms, peace in my innermost being, I began to let go. I cannot be at peace and be in control of everything. I needed to let go of my control and follow a still small voice that offered me the peace I desired.

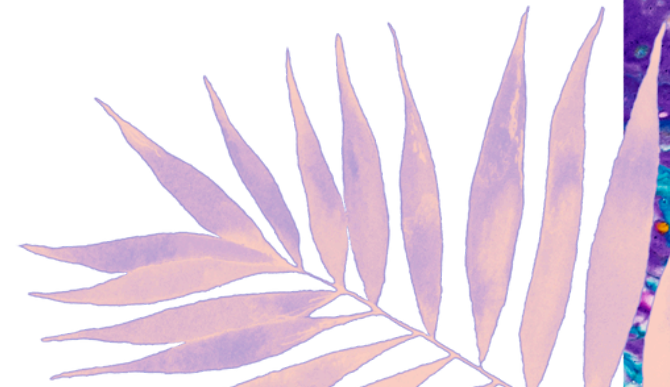
Peace can be found in the most raging storms. Ask Peter. He found peace enough to step out of a boat onto a turbulent sea. Peter's peace was not found in the circumstances of his life.

Peter's peace was found in pure faith and trust in the Lord. The moment doubt crept in his peace left and he began to sink in the waves.

The last few weeks in my search for peace I have been overwhelmed, exhausted, and unsure about so much. But I have found my peace. Like Peter, I had to give up on circumstantial peace and look for the only One who can provide me peace. Jesus says in **John 16:33**, **"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."**

Peace is not in this world. Peace is only through Jesus Christ and His redemption. I can never create peace, make peace, or experience peace if I do not accept the saving grace offered me. I must be still, listen to my Savior who guides my thoughts and brings my petitions to the Father. There my heart will find peace, no matter what storms are raging around me.

Lord, help me release control and trust fully in Your presence, that I may find true peace no matter the storm. Amen.





Thursday, April 10

Oh, God, Why? by Theresa Schmulske

As He went along, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him." —John 9:1–3

The disciples' question may seem strange to us today, but in first century Israel, it was a common cultural belief that any birth defect was a consequence of someone's sin—either the parents or the child while they were still in the womb. However, Jesus gave them a completely different understanding of why this had happened by sharing God's perspective and purpose—that the works of God might be displayed.

Consider Moses as he led the people out of Egypt and came to the banks of the Red Sea. God Himself had led them to that exact location with pillars of cloud and fire. Now they were "trapped," completely surrounded by mountains on both sides, the Red Sea in front, and Pharaoh's army behind. They cried out to Moses, "**Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in this wilderness?**" (Exodus 14:11) But Moses, having been told by God that He was going to give the people a new land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:17), was walking by faith, not by sight. His faith in God gave him the courage to stand before the terrified people and instruct them: "**Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see again forever. The LORD will fight for you while you keep still**" (Exodus 14:11–14).

The people's perspective on why this was happening was that God and Moses must want to kill them all. What was God's perspective on this? He explains why He did this in **Exodus 14:17–18:**

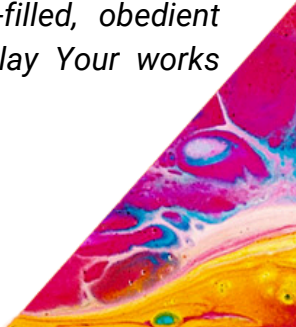
"I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in [to the Red Sea] after them [the Israelites]. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army ... The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord..."

Because of one man's faith and obedience, the Lord was able to display many mighty works—the plagues in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, feeding 2 million people in a wilderness for 40 years, water from a rock, and unexplained victory in battles that should have been a disaster. In John 11, Jesus is informed that Lazarus is sick. His sisters, Mary and Martha, were sure Jesus would come quickly and heal their brother. However, when Jesus received the news, His response was: "**This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it**" (John 11:4).

After the people witnessed the display of God's work through Lazarus's resurrection, "**Then many of the Jews ... which had seen the things that Jesus did, believed on Him**" (John 11:45).

So when you are tempted to ask, "Oh God, why?" be assured the answer is: that the works of God may be displayed. Scripture tells us, in this world we will have tribulation, but Christ has overcome the world and God's love will always sustain us (Romans 8:38–39).

Abba, Father, Thank You for sending Your Son to do many mighty works and die on the cross for us, so that we could believe on Him and have eternal life. Help us to be Your faith-filled, obedient servants today, so that You can continue to display Your works through us. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



Friday, April 11

Finding God in Grief by Mary McCabe

Time is something that each human being has in common. We are all born and we all die. No one knows the exact time of our birth or our death. The older I get, the more I realize that our life is in the hands of our loving Savior. He uses the experiences in our life to demonstrate that He is present, alive, and in control of our life.

Many of our congregation have experienced the sorrow that accompanies the loss of a loved one. God can even use that season of grief and mourning for our good and His glory.

During my lifespan, I have experienced multiple losses: an infant child; a brother who committed suicide; both aged parents; my 50-year-old husband; and six months later, his 41-year-old brother died in my arms. Each grief experience was different, but God was able to carry me through the losses. He supported me through the prayers of Christian family and friends. He also used spiritual songs that uplifted me when I was feeling blue.

He used His Holy Word to comfort and strengthen me and meet my specific needs. For example, my Bible reading for the day of my husband's funeral was **Jeremiah 31:25–26**: **"For I have satisfied the weary soul and I have replenished every sorrowful heart; upon this I awakened and beheld, and my sleep was sweet to me."** The day I went to the lawyer's, the scripture again fit the situation.

It was **Jeremiah 42:3**: **"That the Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk and the thing that we may do."**

A few days later, the reading contained the admonishment, **"Let thy widows trust in thee."**

The dreaded first day back to work, the scripture was appropriate. It was **Lamentations 3:22–23, 32**: **"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness... But though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies."**

These multiple scriptures weren't coincidental. I believe it was God helping me through. One of my favorites is **2 Corinthians 1:3–4**: **"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."**

That scripture encouraged me to become involved in a bereavement ministry. It has been a blessing in my life. So with a thankful heart, I want to encourage you to allow God to use His time in your life to honor and glorify Him, even in the difficult seasons.

Lord, thank You for being near in times of loss. Help us trust You with every season, even the painful ones. Use our story to comfort others and remind us that Your faithfulness never fails. In Jesus' name, Amen.





Saturday, April 12

***Be Ye Holy; For I Am Holy* by Ron Brantley**

In my teenage years during the '60s, I loved most of the rock and roll songs. It seemed there was a new song every week and the different melodies and rhythms were great. The words were secondary—if I even paid attention to them. Later in life I began to listen to the words and found that a lot of them sometimes conveyed very subtle, but horrible thoughts. Like the lyrics "A pretty face can hide an evil mind" in the song "Secret Agent Man", pretty melodies can hide evil thoughts. I really like music of most all styles, but now the words have a lot more importance.

As you probably know, music and its lyrics have a strong emotional means of instilling all kinds of good and bad thoughts in us. Eddie sometimes reminds the choir that God had the Israelites place the choir in front of the army to lead them into battle. Today the choir or praise team leads the congregation in worshiping God.

God also inspired King David, a man after God's own heart, to write many Psalms (songs). David loved the Lord and pursued an intimate relationship with Him much like a young man pursues the girl of his dreams to be his bride. David wrote in Psalm 19:14: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."

At first glance and taken out of context, David seems to want God to accept him as he is, sins and all. However, that is just the opposite of what he is asking. He doesn't know how it can happen, but David knows that in order to be right with his Creator, the Almighty God will have to take care of the problem—i.e., acquit him of secret faults and keep him from deliberate sins.

This is what Jesus made possible for all people with His death and resurrection. The operative word of verse 14 is "Let!" "Let" sins, and by extension what causes them—i.e., our inherited sin nature—not have dominion over me. Our LORD has given us forgiveness of sins and power over our inherited sin nature (see Romans chapters 6–9).

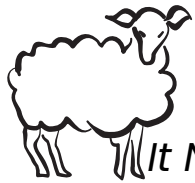
Jesus has given His children what David sought. So what if we, God's children, enjoy songs or anything else with a few "off color thoughts"? Does that do any harm or really matter? David knew it mattered.

Herein is the bigger principle of Holiness. We are to be holy—set apart in every way. David loved God and wanted all of his very being to be holy like God. Our actions, especially our words, testify to ourselves and others of what is on the inside of us. What we receive, we are. God tells us: "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

Charles Spurgeon said:

"Holiness is better than morality. It goes beyond it. Holiness affects the heart. Holiness respects the motive. Holiness regards the whole nature of man. A moral man does not do wrong in act; a holy man hates the thought of doing wrong. A moral man does not swear, but a holy man adores. A moral man would not commit outward sin; a holy man would not commit inward sin. And if committed, he would pour forth floods of tears" (from 1 John 1:9).

Pray with me - *Thank You for letting the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer. Amen.*



Sunday, April 13

It Never Gets Old by Jennifer Keevern

Isaiah 40:8 says, "The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God remains forever."

I recently came across a powerful commentary on a familiar scripture, one I've recited, heard, and read countless times. This time, however, it spoke to me in a new and personal way, and I felt compelled to share it with you.

Psalm 23:

[1] The LORD is my shepherd; — ***That's a relationship***

I shall not want. — ***That's supply***

[2] He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: — ***That's rest***

He leadeth me beside the still waters. — ***That's refreshment***

[3] He restoreth my soul: — ***That's healing***

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness — ***That's guidance***

for His name's sake. — ***That's purpose***

[4] Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death — ***That's testing***

I will fear no evil: — ***That's protection***

for thou art with me; — ***That's faithfulness***

Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. — ***That's discipline***

[5] Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: — ***That's hope***

Thou anointest my head with oil; — ***That's consecration***

my cup runneth over. — ***That's abundance***

[6] Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: — ***That's a blessing***

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord — ***That's security***
forever. — ***That's eternity***

This scripture is such an amazing reminder of not what we have, but who we have in our God. Today, as we reflect on the timeless truth of God's Word, we are reminded that no matter the season or the circumstance, His promises remain unchanged. Just as the grass withers and the flowers fade, God's Word stands firm, offering us a relationship, rest, healing, guidance, and protection—everything we need in this life and beyond. Psalm 23 beautifully captures the essence of His faithfulness, reminding us that He is our Shepherd, guiding us with love and care through every trial and achievement. Today, let us thank Him for the timeless truth of His Word and for the relationship He offers us as our Shepherd. Thank God for His faithful presence, provision, and protection. Pray for the strength to hold fast to His Word, finding security in the eternal promises He has made to us, and trusting that His goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives. Ask God to make His Word alive and active in your heart.

Lord, thank You for Your Word that stands forever. While everything around us fades, Your promises remain steadfast. Help us to continually find strength in Your eternal truth. Jesus, we are grateful for the personal relationship You offer us. Help us to trust You more deeply and rely on Your care, provision, and guidance each day. Thank You, Lord, for Your goodness and mercy that follow us every day and the security we have in Your love and presence. May we continually dwell in Your house and trust in the eternal security You provide. Lord, I pray that we hold fast to Your Word and trust that it will never fail us. Let Your Word continue to speak to us and transform our lives, giving us the strength and wisdom we need to face every situation. In Jesus's name we ask this, Amen.



Monday, April 14

It Never Gets Old by Chris Stein

John 3:16 is a very fundamental verse, and probably the most well-known verse by non-believers. We will touch on that, but mostly today I want to focus on the verses that immediately follow, and how they apply to Christ followers.

First, let's review **John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."**

Now let's read **John 3:17: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."**

How many of you have ever felt condemned by the church for something you know is sin—or even something the church calls sin, but you aren't sure if it actually is or not? Sometimes the church does condemn when they shouldn't, and sometimes the church gets accused of condemning when they're actually trying to call out sin in love. Between members of the church, it's important to help each other stop sinning because it hurts our personal relationship with God.

Because humans like to be right, we often enjoy arguing over what is or isn't sin. But I propose that's the wrong focus—especially when talking to people who don't yet know Jesus.

Instead of debating a specific sin (especially one that secular society and the church might disagree on), change the conversation. Ask the person if they've ever committed **A** sin. For example: Have they ever told a lie? Disobeyed their parents? Everyone has. **Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."**


Once someone admits they've sinned, then it's time to share the good news. **John 3:18: "Whoever believes in him (Jesus) is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."**

We can encourage others not to let the failings of the church—or the devil's false narrative about the church—keep them from a personal relationship with Jesus. Whatever you've done in your past that you condemn yourself for... whatever happened last night, or even this morning, that makes you feel not enough—you're right.

On your own, you aren't enough to save yourself. But the good news—the great news—is that you don't have to be.

John 3:17 says: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save it through him."

Let us pray: Jesus, thank You for saving us when we couldn't save ourselves. Help me lead with love, not condemnation, and give me courage to share my faith with grace and gratitude. Bring those who feel hurt by the church across my path so I can point them to You with compassion. Amen.



Tuesday, April 15

Beauty After the Storm by Beth McGlamery

Last April, Howard took me on a carriage ride in downtown Charleston. My favorite part was Colonial Park. I started staring at the trees with pretty pink flowers wrapped around them; I began snapping pictures. Then our tour guide shared the story behind them:

The "Peggy Martin" - This beautiful rose was named after a Louisiana gardener who went through a tough time during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Her home and property were submerged under 20 feet of salt water for two weeks. However, there was a survivor, a beauty of a rose, that Martin had acquired through pass along cuttings from friends in New Orleans. This rose truly is a symbol of resilience and strength.

Charleston's hospitality toward New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, due to their own experience with Hurricane Hugo, taught us an important lesson. As our tour guide pointed out, amidst the devastation, one can always find beauty. Gardener Martin's clippings only further reinforced this message.

This story reminds me of being broken and being rebuilt over and over. Every one of us has some brokenness in our past. Perhaps we have grieved from a broken heart, complicated situations, loss of health, or relationships.



Whether from choices we have made or circumstances beyond our control, sometimes we find ourselves so profoundly broken that we don't know how things could ever be restored.

I have been through some incredibly challenging moments of brokenness. Despite facing situations where I felt shattered and ground to dust, I have become stronger. Losing my late husband, family members, a career over 20 years, and pets were devastating experiences—I felt hopeless.

After meeting Jesus, my life took a transformative turn. He tenderly collected the shattered pieces of my soul and patiently put them back together, one fragment at a time. In the place of my damaged heart, He fashioned a brand new one. Whenever I experience another setback, He fills the gaps with His boundless love and vitality. God rejuvenates me, and once again, I feel whole.

**"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."
—Psalms 147:3**

Dear Lord, I praise You that You gather the outcast and that You heal the brokenhearted. Lord, When I come to You with a broken heart and a wounded spirit, I seek Your healing touch. I stand on the promises in Your word that heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds. Pour out Your healing power upon me and restore my heart and mind. I trust in Your unfailing love and mercy, confident in Your faithfulness to fulfill Your promises. Thank you for being my Healer, my Comforter, my Everything. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Wednesday, April 16

A Devoted Follower by Cynthia M. Putman

“Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him.”

—Matthew 27:58b

Three of the four gospels state that Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest body of Jewish leaders who interpreted the law. He is also referred to as “a **rich man**” who was a follower of Jesus in **Matthew 27:57**.

This Joseph was thought to be a somewhat secret follower of Jesus who did not approve of the ways the Jewish leaders manipulated the Romans and the Jewish people by paying false witnesses and telling lies to get Jesus crucified. Once Jesus’ physical body had been tortured and He died, Joseph went to the Roman governor Pilate and asked him to release the body of Jesus to him. It is said that he had Jesus’ body cleaned and wrapped in a clean linen cloth. Jesus was then carried to a tomb that Joseph had likely purchased for himself, placed inside, and a huge stone was placed over the opening.

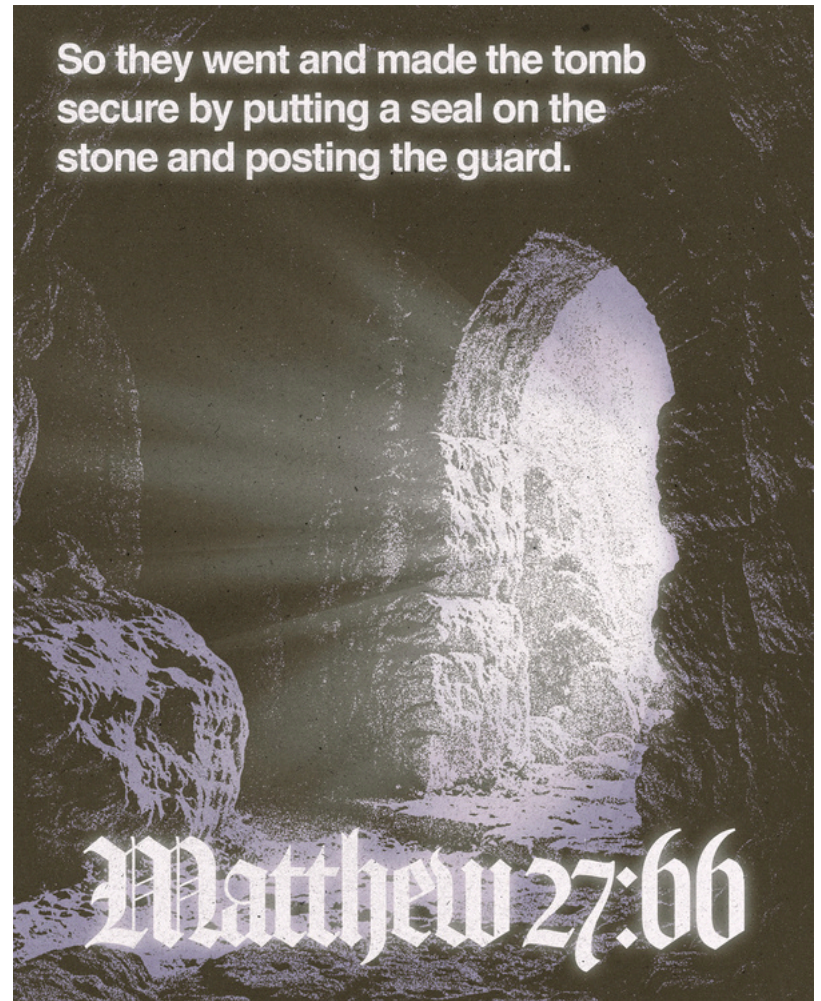
We do not read much about this Joseph after that. There are a number of stories and myths after Jesus arose that say Joseph was highly criticized for giving Jesus an appropriate burial in the Garden of Gethsemane. Other tales abound, but Joseph has a place in Christian history as a man who committed a worthy deed for our Savior and likely was a true believer for the rest of his life.

What we can gain from his story is that we must be prepared to do the right thing regardless of the consequences. God leads us towards righteousness, but we must make the decision to follow His will for our lives, serve Him, and fulfill our purpose on earth as a believer.

Dear God, thank You for the story of Jesus that lets us realize the incredible love You have for us. Open our minds and hearts to fulfill our life’s purpose for You. Amen.

**So they went and made the tomb
secure by putting a seal on the
stone and posting the guard.**

Matthew 27:66



Thursday, April 17

The Father's Will by Bob Cardinal

"...going a little farther He fell on His face and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.'"

—Matthew 26:39a

It was Thursday night and Jesus had left His disciples at a distance to pray alone in the garden. His heart was heavy; the Scripture records Him saying, "My soul is sorrowful, even to death." The Son of Man knew what was about to happen. He knew that betrayal was imminent. He knew He would be scourged, beaten, and hung on a cross. He knew the sin of the world would be laid upon Him and He would suffer a cruel death. But was it possible for this cup to pass from Him?

There was no other way. The sin of man entered the world through man, so only man could pay the penalty. But who was worthy? Who was without sin? No one except God Himself. Only the sinless Son of Man could pay the penalty for you and me. He did what we could not do. He alone could reconcile us to a holy God and give us the promise of eternity in His presence.

"...nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

—Matthew 26:39b

The Son of Man is also the Son of God. He is perfectly holy and perfectly sinless. Every perfect attribute of God is true also of the Son of God. But as the Son of Man, He also showed us what it is to be perfectly obedient to God the Father. It was for this very purpose that Jesus came: to do the will of the Father and to be completely obedient to Him. What better time than Easter is there for us to surrender to God's will and commit to obedience to Him?

Lord, You alone are holy. You alone are worthy. Only You could pay the price for sin that we could never pay. Help us to walk in surrender and obedience to You. Amen.



Friday, April 18

Is the Grave Really Empty? by Michael Atkinson

She was just a few days old when she passed away. The baby was the daughter of Eric and Renee Wooten, who was one of our student pastors at Summerville Baptist. Bethany, in her few days of life... changed our lives!

Richie was in his 30s when he passed away. We shared many meals together talking about life when he was in his younger 20s. We ran miles and miles together training for half marathons and other races. He actually worked at the church for a few years before joining the Army. I officiated his wedding. Richie enriched my life.

Every Easter season (and other times too), I visit the cemetery where their bodies have been laid to rest. I walk among the grave markers which now include my late wife, Sherry.

I wonder if they're still in the grave.

As a minister in the church, I've been around death a good bit. I've been with many people when they passed away and certainly their families afterwards.

Death is so final.



And then this passage comes to mind, found in **Luke 24:5**, where the question is asked: "**Why are you looking for the living among the dead? He (Jesus) is not here but He has risen!**"

At the cemetery, when I'm walking among the graves, I recall these words and remember the promise that Jesus gave — that He would rise again, that death would be defeated, and that as believers, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

Joy and hope then begin to fill my heart, knowing that Jesus brings life and life abundantly to us now and eventually with Him in Heaven.

During this Easter season, I encourage you to remember that the tomb is empty and that Jesus is indeed Our Risen Savior, bringing LIFE to you and to me.

CELEBRATE LIFE!

Heavenly Father, thank You for eternal life that comes through Jesus Christ. Thank You that the grave is empty and that Heaven is filled with family and friends who have placed their faith in You. Lead us to share Your Truth with others. Amen.



Saturday, April 19

Choose Life by Dawn Bogstad

"(19) This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live (20) and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." —Deuteronomy 30:19-20

The Bible is an amazing library of books written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It has brilliant reoccurring themes that run through the 66 books connecting them like colorful threads that come together in an amazing tapestry that reveals God to us. One of the themes that runs through the Bible is the theme of life and death. In Genesis 1-3 we discover that God is the source of life. We also learn that trusting and obeying Him is the way to life and not trusting or obeying Him only leads to death.

After the fall of man, the Israelites were God's chosen instrument to show the way to life to the nations of the world by trusting and obeying God. In Deuteronomy 30, Moses told the Israelites that set before them was life and death and to choose life. He told them to love God, obey Him and remain faithful to Him because He is their life. This would require faith, love and humility. However, just like Adam and Eve (and the serpent of old that spurred them on to mistrust God and go their own way), they struggled with pride - which always leads to death.

Jesus told us in John 15 that we need to abide in Him because apart from Him we can bear no fruit. Those who don't bear fruit are cast aside...because they're dead. The first step to sin is the lowering of God (and those He loves) and the raising up of self...and the wage of sin is death.

But the first step to life is love. In the beginning was a relationship—full of agape love—that overflowed and chose to create new life. That agape relationship was between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Prideful mankind chooses self—but God is not like us. Even though Jesus is God, the Creator of everything and worthy of all praise, He chose to love us... by humbling Himself.

As DC Talk once said, "Love is a verb." Like all verbs, it involves a choice. Just like faith without works is dead, love without works is dead. Both are always followed by evidence.

Philippians 2 shows us the evidence of Jesus' love. It says that Jesus humbled Himself, took on human flesh, and lived a sinless life. Yet instead of exalting Himself, He took on the punishment and wrath meant for His enemies—us. He endured a horrible, painful, humiliating cross. He fought the battle with sin and death we couldn't win—to give us a victory we don't deserve. Out of love, Jesus humbled Himself. Then God exalted Him.

Once the price was paid, death's prison door opened. The stone was rolled away. Not just His on that Easter morning... He rolled away yours, too. All you have to do is take His hand, trust and obey Him. Step out and follow Him. Choose love. Choose humility. CHOOSE LIFE.

Jesus, thank You for loving us. Thank You for Your life-giving sacrifice on the cross. Father, help us to see people the way You see them and to love them the way You love them. Holy Spirit, fill us and help us bring life to every situation we find ourselves in—by showing Your love, speaking Your words, and doing Your will. Amen.

A vibrant graphic with a dark blue background. It features stylized palm fronds in yellow and light blue, and a large, bright pink sun. The text is centered over these elements.

DEATH WAS DEFEATED

EASTER IS MORE THAN JUST A CROSS AND A TOMB

Sunday, April 20: Easter Sunday!

Chosen by Karen E. DeWaele

"For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight." — Ephesians 1:4

Have you ever wondered what the Father was doing before He set the earth into motion? Perhaps He was dreaming up creation, delighting in the thought of man's birth. Maybe He was envisioning the future and all the wondrous works He would accomplish through Jesus, His beloved Son. Or could it be that He was reveling over how His children would one day bring glory to His Name?

My very first memory is when God revealed Himself to me. It seemed as though time stood still and my spirit was plucked from my body—an experience I'll always remember and cherish. Soon after, I called upon the Lord one night and said: "God, if you're really there, then please hear my cry and answer me." He immediately responded through the clouds: *"My beloved child, you are mine forever. I have heard your cry; fear not, for I am here."* I experienced inexplicable joy as He wiped away my tears. Later that night, I called out again and asked Him to stay with me. He said: *"My Presence is here with you now and I will never leave nor forsake you."* As He wrapped His arms around me, I felt the soothing warmth of His embrace and fell into peaceful sleep. After this, I was broken by the cross and met Jesus—falling deeply in love with Him. One day in church, while a missionary from Nigeria was speaking, God's purposes hit me like a bolt of lightning. He assured me: *"I have planted my seeds of desire within you, which I will grow. Don't worry, they will make sense one day. Cling to me and follow me all of your days, for I will never fail you."* I have been following the leading of His voice ever since...

What does it mean to be chosen by God? It means...

- To carry out the Great Commission and bring the Gospel into dark places
- To endure fiery trials and rely on His strength
- To endure sickness and pain and give God glory regardless of healing
- To suffer in order to receive grace
- To be hated by the world and still show love
- To be led by His Spirit and experience joy and peace
- To be set apart for holiness and favored by God
- To grieve and be comforted
- To be called out for His purposes
- To intercede and witness chains breaking
- To be part of the body of Christ—His Church
- To encourage and bring hope
- To welcome spiritual orphans into the Kingdom
- To work in dark places and reveal truth
- To face a martyr's death with victory
- To be co-heirs with Christ and children of El Elyon, the Most High God
- To be targets of the enemy and experience divine protection
- To serve God and know Him
- To receive spiritual gifts that bless others
- To shine the light of Jesus and proclaim His Name boldly
- To bear the cross so the Father may be glorified

This short life is both a privilege and an honor. We are the wonderment of God's handiwork—reflections of the One who was, is, and always will be. **"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."** —John 3:16 (KJV) Salvation is a free gift—but not everyone accepts it. Some will die in their sins with no hope. I've seen this firsthand, and the pain cuts deep. There is no glory in the death of unbelievers.

So, what will you do? God chose you first. Will you choose Him now? Time is short—*don't wait until it's too late.*

HE IS ALIVE!

HAPPY EASTER



What Now?

You've just spent 21 days reflecting on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—through the real, honest voices of people in our church family. You've read stories of struggle, healing, hope, and transformation. But the most important question remains:

What will you do with Jesus?

If you've felt Him stirring your heart through these pages—whether for the first time or in a fresh way—we invite you to respond.

Don't wait.

Surrender your heart to Him. Reach out. Come worship with us. Let's walk this journey together.

You are not alone, and you are always welcome at Summerville Baptist.

Contact Us or Plan Your Visit:

📍 Summerville Baptist Church, Downtown Campus
417 Central Avenue, Summerville, SC 29483
Regular Sunday Services at 8:15am, 9:30am, and 11am
Randy Harling, Lead Pastor

📍 Summerville Baptist Church, Pinewood Campus
1114 Orangeburg Road, Summerville, SC 29483
Regular Sunday Services at 9am and 10:30am
James Lawson, Campus Pastor

✉ sbc@summervillebaptist.org

☎ (843) 873-2440

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